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ABSTRACT

The New York City Board of Education has implemented a school quality review system called Performance Assessment in Schools Systemwide: Essential Elements of Exemplary Schools (PASS). The PASS process provides a set of standards of exemplary educational practice and a model for assessing schools in relation to these standards. The process is designed to help school teams plan school improvement and raise student achievement levels. PASS possesses many of the characteristics of a student performance assessment in that it is an open, holistic, process-oriented assessment. This study highlights the development of PASS over the last 3 years, delineates the current model, and describes variations in its implementation. The study further examines threats to the reliability of the ratings that arise when PASS is used for individual personnel appraisals or as a result of the dual role that visiting reviewers play as change agents and external inspectors. Expanding the rating scale appears to have countered the tendency for grade inflation, but the reliability of scores is still threatened by inadequate training and inexperience of review team members and continued apprehension about the underlying purpose of the review process. These issues will be addressed in the continuing development of the PASS system. An appendix compares ratings of the PASS review from two different sets of evaluators. (SLD)

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The Relationship between Accountability, Measurement Scale, and Grade Inflation in School Quality Review Ratings

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The New York City Board of Education is focused on providing a performance-driven educational system in which standards for student learning are clearly defined, assessment practices are aligned with standards, and there is continual evaluation and revision of educational strategies based on assessment outcomes. An important part of this effort is the implementation of a school quality review system, called *Performance Assessment in Schools Systemwide: Essential Elements of Exemplary Schools (PASS).*

The *PASS* process provides a set of standards of exemplary educational practice and a model for assessing schools in relation to those standards. The process is designed to help school teams plan school improvement and, thereby, raise student achievement levels. *PASS* is grounded in the belief that school improvement plans must be school-based and emerge from a review conducted by a broad representation of the school community.

PASS, as its name implies, possesses many of the same characteristics as a student performance assessment. It is rooted in standards and emphasizes instruction. It is an open, holistic, process-oriented assessment. *PASS* encourages a sense of ownership and self-reflection that can be invaluable in enabling school staff to determine for themselves the quality of their instructional program. In addition, as with all performance assessments, there are challenges to the uniform use of *PASS's* scoring rubrics.

The following study highlights *PASS's* development over the last three years, delineates the current model, and then describes variations in its implementation. After presenting this background information, the study examines threats to the reliability of the ratings which arise when *PASS* is used for individual personnel appraisals or as a result of the dual role that visiting reviewers play as change agents and external inspectors.

The *PASS* review process is a work in progress. Over the past three years, the process has been collaboratively developed, field-tested, and implemented with constant feedback from the field. In this context, the following study represents a progress report, focusing on changes in rating procedures as mid-course corrections.

DEVELOPMENT

Research and development for *PASS* has largely been the responsibility of the central board's Division of Assessment and Accountability (DAA) which has developed and revised the *PASS* instruments, provided training to staff from the city's 40 local school districts, and conducted formative evaluations of the process. In assuming the lead on conducting actual reviews, the central board's Office of Monitoring and School Improvement (OMSI) has worked in tandem with DAA to test the field procedures and to help refine the process. In addition, OMSI has had an external review function, which will be discussed later.

Introduction of the Instrument, 1995-96

The Deputy Chancellor for Instruction initiated the development of a school quality review instrument in December 1995 in an effort to support focused planning, to improve teaching and learning, and to promote the high standards of achievement associated with effective schools.

DAA, after reviewing the literature on school reform, designed the *PASS Review Guide*. The resulting document was a product of a collaborative process utilizing input from several constituencies with divergent backgrounds and perspectives including parents, administrators, supervisors, teachers, State Education Department representatives, and public advocacy groups, as well as central board and district staff. Schools used early versions of the document as templates for developing redesign plans. The language of the rubrics served as a vocabulary that described the kinds of exemplary practices planners wished to incorporate into their school redesigns. During summer 1996, the instrument was field-tested in a sample of schools. On the basis of the results the *Review Guide* was shortened.

Piloting the Process, 1996-97

During the 1996-97 school year, the *PASS Review Guide* was used in 35 New York City schools. OMSI and DAA conducted the reviews in low-performing schools and schools with special programs. These central board staff determined the extent to which schools met the *PASS* standards and modeled the *PASS* process for school leadership teams. Based on reviewers' experiences, DAA, in consultation with OMSI, further refined the *PASS Review Guide*. In addition, DAA developed the *PASS Toolkit*, which provides reviewers with an overview of the steps involved in the review process and a comprehensive set of tools for use in its implementation.

Systemwide Implementation, 1997-98

In fall 1997, the Deputy Chancellor for Instruction established policy to encourage local school district office staff to work directly with low-performing schools. For the first time, the districts were given responsibility for conducting *PASS* reviews jointly with school staff. The central board provided funding to the districts for the following specific purposes:

- to enable districts to determine how well schools were performing in comparison to a common set of standards;
- to support these schools in developing better school improvement plans based on the *PASS* review findings; and
- to support professional development activities in response to the *PASS* review findings.

In January 1998, trained district staff began conducting *PASS* reviews in low-performing schools. Twenty-six districts conducted formal *PASS* reviews in 202 of New York City's 1145 schools. Included were 17 elementary / middle school districts, six high school districts, and the district serving severely disabled students.

The guidelines to districts for conducting *PASS* reviews entailed a process that differed significantly from OMSI reviews in that the results were not to be made available to the central board. District staff were asked to focus on building trust between themselves and school teams in order to encourage a process of self-reflection within the school communities. Districts reinforced

this process by allowing *PASS Review Guides* with completed ratings to be treated as internal documents, remaining within the district.

THE *PASS* MODEL

The major purpose of the *PASS* system is to enable school leaders to develop, review, and revise school plans that focus on the essential elements of effective teaching and learning. They gain insight into how their schools perform in relation to what is expected of an exemplary school by rating themselves against the performance standards and expectations that comprise the *PASS Review Guide*. Essentially, a *PASS* review is a collaborative and self-reflective process in which team members work in pairs to collect and discuss evidence and then engage in an expansive, self-reflective discussion to consider the evidence in light of *PASS*'s standards of practice.

The review team visits classrooms and other areas of the school in pairs. In a *joint* review, each pair is comprised of a visitor and a member of the school leadership team. Trained visitors model the process for their partners. Through this participation, school team members gain first-hand experience in collecting evidence and acquire skills for self-reflection which serve them in creating meaningful school plans. In addition, the presence of leadership team members helps to put school staff at ease during classroom visits. Further, school team members provide information about the school and its history to the visitors, as the pairs walk around the building.

The school is reviewed holistically. Team partners typically spend one-and-a-half days collecting an array of evidence throughout the school and determining as *a pair* the extent to which their evidence matches the *PASS Review Guide* descriptors. All review pairs reconvene for an exit conference where their evidence is pooled, and the whole team determines by consensus a rating and comments for each standard. In examining evidence, reviewers reflect on whether a pattern of activity or behavior supports *excellence* and *high standards*. The product is a completed *PASS* Guide which remains in the school for follow-up and planning.

In the spirit of collaboration, visitors encourage a collegial constructive interchange of ideas with school leaders, so that the school personnel view the process as supportive, rather than intrusive or imposing. By experiencing the review with the added perspective of a *critical friend*, the leadership team undertakes more honest self-reflection and self-assessment. The visiting reviewers do not assume a monitoring role, but rather engage the leadership team and other school personnel as partners in collecting data for a joint study. As investigators rather than objects of this inquiry, leadership team members are more likely to use their *PASS* experience to revise their school improvement plans with a focus on the essential elements of exemplary schools.

The school leadership team extends the knowledge and experience gained from the *PASS* process to the entire school community. Team members encourage staff, students, and parents to develop strategies for ongoing self-assessment based on the standards of practice in the *PASS Review Guide*. In addition, the team reviews and revises the school's Comprehensive Education Plan and other plans on the basis of the *PASS* ratings and comments.

The *PASS Guide* is organized into ten essential elements of exemplary schools. The ten elements are in turn subdivided into 22 areas and within each area is a set of indicators for evaluating school performance. In all, there are over 80 such indicators. The Table of Contents lists the 22 areas.

School Mission/Philosophy Belief in Students	**Instructional Resources** Library Technology Equipment, Supplies and Materials
School Climate Welcoming and Orderly Atmosphere Environment	**Parent Involvement** Parent Participation and Community Outreach Parent Education
School Organization Organizational Plan, Structure, and Practice Staff Qualifications	**Support Services** Attendance and Pupil Personnel
Curriculum and Instruction Alignment of Instructional Programs Development and Use of Instructional Materials Instructional Practice Multiple Instructional Strategies/Approaches	**External and Physical Resources** Securing and Allocating Instructional Resources Non-Instructional Resources
Professional Development Development of Staff Formal Activities	**Assessment** Alignment of Assessment with Curriculum Student Performance School Effectiveness

Measurement Scale

The *PASS Review Guide* includes a measurement scale to determine the extent to which the school demonstrates exemplary practices within each indicator of effectiveness. Each rating is based on the evidence that is gathered during the school review visit. Descriptive statements are included next to each item on the rating scale, and reviewers must decide which of the three statements best describes the evidence they have gathered for that item. Evidence comes from written documentation, interviews with members of the school community, and observations during the school visit. In 1997-98, the school was given a rating for each item in the *PASS Review Guide*, as follows:

Meeting standard	There is sufficient evidence to indicate that the school meets the standard under review.
Approaching standard	The school does not meet the standard, but there is evidence to indicate that they are engaged in activities that will eventually enable them to meet it.
Below standard	There is little evidence that the school is approaching the particular standard.

In addition to providing statements within these three categories and including a column for the agreed-upon rating, the *PASS Review Guide* also provides a column for comments and explanations. The following page from the *PASS Review Guide* is illustrative of the format throughout.

New York City Performance Assessment in Schools Systemwide (PASS), 1997-98
Essential Elements of Exemplary Schools: Performance Review Guide

Please select one rating for each item and include: source of evidence, comments , and explanations

ELEMENT *Area*	Meeting Standard	Approaching Standard	Below Standard	Rating M. A. B	Evidence, Comments, Explanation
CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION ***Multiple Instructional Strategies/ Approaches***	Teachers employ a variety of instructional approaches that are appropriate to the subject area, grade level, and diverse student learning styles. Teachers provide opportunities for students to work together in small settings and develop mutually supportive relationships. The school provides instruction to enable students with special needs to meet the same standards as other students. Students are educated in the least restrictive and most integrated environment possible consistently throughout the school.	Teachers employ a variety of instructional approaches that are appropriate to subject area and grade level. Teachers provide opportunities for students to work together in small settings. The school provides instruction to enable students with special needs to meet most of the same standards applied to other students. Students are educated in the least restrictive and most integrated environment possible mostly throughout the school.	Teachers employ limited instructional approaches that are appropriate to subject area and grade level. Teachers provide opportunities for students to work in small settings. The school provides instruction to enable students with special needs to meet some of the same standards applied to other students. Students are educated in the least restrictive and most integrated environment possible selected grades/courses.		

The three statements associated with a rating for each standard are generally differentiated by a few key, underlined words. These modifiers are the basis for distinguishing school performance. The modifier All" is often implicit; for example, the underlined words in the three statements may be: aligned (meeting standard), mostly aligned (approaching standard),and partially aligned.(below standard). Reviewers determine if the alignment is systematic and uniform school-wide (for meeting standard), there is alignment in the majority of instances (approaching standard) or alignment in minimal cases (below standard).

Determining Ratings

The critical, culminating activity in a *PASS* review is an exit conference in which the pairs of reviewers -- representing insiders and outsiders -- share and discuss evidence pertaining to each indicator. By comparing notes during the course of the review, pairs have already established a level of consensus about evidence they have gathered. In the exit conference, it is necessary to extend that consensus to the entire group.

In deciding on a rating for a particular item, the review team keeps the following general considerations in mind: since the review is a brief visit and consists of a snap-shot of the life of the school, it is necessary to look for *patterns* of evidence. These patterns are the basis for generalizing about what is happening in the entire school over the course of the school-year. In examining evidence, reviewers reflect on whether a pattern of activity or behavior is occurring *systematically* and *school-wide.*

The review team members collectively determine which of the three statements associated with an indicator best describes the evidence. The team then assigns a rating which corresponds to one of the three statements (i.e., *meets* standard, *approaches* standard, *below* standard). Reviewers focus on the key words that appear in the "Meeting Standard" column and determine whether the evidence for that item is *systematic* and *school-wide* to support a rating of meeting the standard. The rating is based on the school's performance, on what *is happening*, or *has happened*. What *will happen*, *should happen*, or *has begun to happen* may be noted in the *Comments* section, but is not the determinant of the rating. Good intentions may reflect a well-conceived plan, but are not sufficient for meeting a standard.

The *Comments* section allows reviewers to provide explanations and evidence to support ratings. Here, reviewers acknowledge exemplary practices and also identify specific practices which contribute to below standard ratings. This section also provides a space where school reviewers can furnish evidence that may have been overlooked, in order to support a higher rating. . The comments help the school team to understand the ratings so they can develop and revise plans for school improvement.

IMPLEMENTATION APPROACHES

Within the framework of the general model, *PASS* has been implemented in a number of ways. Most *PASS* reviews have been *joint reviews,* conducted by teams comprised of visitors trained in the *PASS* process together with members of the school leadership team. The visitors have been representatives from the 40 community district or high school superintendents' offices, or central board offices such as OMSI. The goal of a joint *PASS* review is to provide a valid assessment of a school's educational practices from the point of view of both the school leaders and outside visitors. In addition, the visiting review team members provide a training function by modeling the *PASS* process. In contrast, *internal reviews* have been conducted independently by a school review team, comprised of members of the school leadership team, including parents who have been trained in the *PASS* process.

Within these variations, there have been instances of *PASS* being used for accountability purposes, rather than simply for school planning. OMSI has had a special responsibility in some of their joint reviews for conducting quality assurance studies. In addition, some superintendents and principals have used the *PASS* ratings as personnel performance appraisals. Both of these approaches -- the former a legitimate alternative and the latter a conspicuous misuse -- have tended to reinforce the unfortunate idea that *PASS* is a performance evaluation that can have punitive consequences.

OMSI's External Reviews

In addition to 1997-98's district office-sponsored *PASS* reviews, OMSI conducted a series of reviews in 31 schools under registration review (SURR schools) as part of an agreement with the State Education Department (SED). The schools were required to redesign because they had not met state student performance targets for a number of years. The purpose of OMSI's reviews was to demonstrate that these *corrective action* schools had indeed been redesigned--that changes were basic and structural, not cosmetic and superficial.

SED's *corrective action* plan required that review teams go into schools not only to assess them on the exemplary school indicators but also to "work with school staff to build their capacity to conduct self-reviews and use the information to improve the implementation of the redesign plans." As the review process has evolved, a tension has emerged from this dual mandate; reviewers have had to strike a delicate balance between externally-imposed rigor and sensitivity to the necessary dynamics for stimulating organizational change in schools.

Insofar as the results of all OMSI reviews of redesign schools are reported back to the central board, OMSI's role in providing an external accountability system has persisted. At the same time, as the general model of *PASS* has become more interactive, OMSI has incorporated the model's collaborative aspects. Thus, for the 1997-98 school year, when the *PASS* focus on collaboration was strengthened, OMSI reviews engaged school team members as active participants

to a greater degree than in the previous year by encouraging school members of review teams to contribute evidence and join in the discussion of ratings.

District Reviews

Most district office reviewers reported that, through the pairing with school staff, they promote open, collaborative relationships with school teams and model the *PASS* process. While collaborative relationships between district and school staff were established in many districts, the process progressed unevenly. In schools where there had been little training of review team members, collaboration was unlikely to occur. Periodic debriefings between team members helped to some degree to improve collegiality and to decrease wariness on the part of the school team.

However, before experiencing a review, because of a lack of familiarity with a holistic, self-reflective review, school participants had difficulty believing that the review would be for their benefit, to help them assess weaknesses *and* strengths, and to bring more focus to their planning. It was difficult to convince the staff, *before* they experienced *the PASS* process, that the reviewers were not coming in to monitor particular programs, and that the process would be collaborative.

The apprehension was exacerbated by occasional instances of superintendents' and principals' wanting to use review findings as evidence for a negative report on an individual staff member. These particular misuses reinforced general suspicion of ulterior motives, especially in the context of increasing accountability throughout the school system. More importantly, from the point of view of the *PASS* review process, it put school staff on the defensive, undermining honest, self-reflection about teaching and learning.

RELIABILITY OF RATINGS

In spring 1997, SED called for the central board to contract with an independent, external evaluator to "provide an independent perspective in the comprehensive evaluation of the [redesign] schools". The external evaluator would conduct *PASS* reviews and produce reports which would provide information for reviewing and refining the *PASS* process. Bank Street College of Education won the contract. The focus of Bank Street's evaluation for the 1997-98 school year was to examine in detail the validity and utility of the *PASS* review process, as implemented by OMSI in the SURR schools.

Bank Street conducted reviews in a sample of ten schools drawn from the pool of *corrective action* SURR schools. These schools represent seven districts in three boroughs and close to 10,000 students. OMSI had conducted two *PASS* reviews in each of the schools (with one exception) one in the fall and another in the winter.

Because the Bank Street reviews were designed to provide an independent validation of OMSI's *PASS* process, they diverged in two important aspects from OMSI's implementation of *PASS*. First, unlike other SURR school *PASS* reviews, the ratings had no external consequences for the schools; and second, in a significant departure from the *PASS* model, school staff did not

participate in determining ratings, which Bank Street completed several days after the visit. The resultant ratings were intended for validating the process, not for providing a direct evaluation of a school's performance.

Perceived Validity of the Ratings. In Bank Street's feedback reports on their overall impressions of the *PASS* process, the reviewers were overwhelmingly positive. As one team leader put it, "It presents an idea of what is happening in the school--it allows you to peel away the layers to examine the heart of the school. It is a positive way for the school to examine its own practices". Another team leader highlighted "the interactive, open-ended nature of the *Review Guide* and the process" as the most important aspects of *PASS*. There was a general consensus that the process was "valuable and valid."

In all cases, reviewers reported that school personnel were open, forthcoming, and collegial with the Bank Street reviewers. In only two schools did reviewers also report a degree of guardedness on the part of some school members. This degree of openness may have been possible because the ratings had no external consequences for the schools; presumably, schools did not feel the same pressure to receive high ratings that they would during an OMSI visit.

Most of the Bank Street reviewers agreed that their ratings reflected the overall quality of the schools they visited. One team leader would have welcomed the opportunity to give a more global, descriptive assessment of the school and the nature of the school leadership in addition to commenting on the individual items. However, this reviewer also acknowledged that this kind of commentary runs counter to "the need for the process to be reproducible by any group of observers."

Comparison of Ratings. When the actual ratings of OMSI's second visit and Bank Street's visit were compared, overall, using a three point scale (*meeting standard* = 2, *approaching standard* =1, and *below standard = 0)*, the average ratings for each area were lower for Bank Street than OMSI (see Appendix A), with the exception of the area of *Instructional Practice* which was rated almost identically by both groups. However, the relative ranking of the ratings by the two groups were highly correlated ($r = .841$, $p<.001$); suggesting that the *pattern* of ratings was the similar for both OMSI and Bank Street.

While there was internal consistency in the relative rank of the ratings for indicators within an area (as indicated in Appendix A), the overall ratings diverged. The following chart indicates that with few exceptions, Bank Street's ratings were lower than OMSI's.

TABLE 1

Comparison of OMSI and Bank Street PASS Ratings, 1997-98*

School	OMSI 1ST Visit		OMSI 2ND Visit		Bank St Visit	
	Total Score	# OF M's**	Total Score	# OF M's**	Total Score	# OF M's**
A	107	35	118	43	67	13
B	87	18	124	48	85	29
C	46	3	145	64	78	12
D	137	55	141	60	149	72
E	136	54	143	63	112	34
F	46	10	128	50	71	15
G	121	44	127	49	81	15
H	137	60	135	56	85	14
I	144	62	158	76	83	16
J	144	64	na	na	152	73

* Where necessary ratings were adjusted, based on total of 81 indicators, for comparison purposes.
**Number of the 81 items which reviewers rated as *meeting the standard*. See page 6 above for examples.

A series of discussions between Bank Street and OMSI reviewers, which took place after Bank Street completed its reviews and ratings, illuminated the reasons for Bank Street's lower rating pattern. Bank Street reviewers tended to use more stringent standards for giving *meeting standard* and *approaching standard* ratings. (In about a dozen instances, Bank Street reviewers actually gave ratings which were in-between *meeting standard* and *approaching standard*, or *approaching standard* and *below standard*, although these ratings were rounded off for purpose of the analysis.) Comments and discussion between the two sets of reviewers revealed a shared understanding of the schools' strengths and weaknesses, but OMSI often gave higher ratings in order to acknowledge progress from the previous visit.

Further discussion about specific schools also revealed that in some cases OMSI reviewers had given a higher rating because they had more information about the school's situation, either by building on information from previous visits, or because information was presented to them at the school's exit conference. Since Bank Street reviews did not incorporate consensus-building, there was no chance for schools to provide follow-up evidence that might have been missed by reviewers during the course of the visit. Bank Street reviewers responded that they would have given a higher rating had they known this information.

The discussions between Bank Street and OMSI about their field experiences highlighted the challenge of fulfilling the different *PASS* purposes. *PASS* is at once a taxonomy of standards of school practice and an agent for change. A balance must be struck between maintaining rigor and

encouraging school personnel to engage in self-reflection as one of the most productive means to engender school improvement

RESPONSE TO FINDINGS

Based on feedback from Bank Street and OMSI, as well as districts and schools which also conducted reviews during the 1997-98 school year, DAA staff incorporated the following changes into the 1998-99 versions of the *PASS Review Guide*. The changes were meant to improve the validity of the indicators as standards of school performance.

- A Glossary of Terms was added to the *PASS* guide so that criteria for ratings are more clearly spelled out.
- The use of modifiers for the different ratings has been made more consistent.
- Each indicator in the document was thoroughly reviewed; some were modified and/or added, based on Bank Street recommendations.

The Five-Point Scale

In addition, to improve the reliability of the ratings, the rating scheme was revised as a five-point scale to allow for acknowledgment of progress, while maintaining rigor in rating a school as *meeting standard*. School improvement could be reflected in a higher rating, without necessarily requiring the highest rating.

Performance indicators are now displayed on a five point scale: 5 is a performance description for *meeting standard*, 3 is a descriptor for *approaching the standard*, and 1 describes school performance that is *below the standard*. The two additional rating points in this version of the *Guide*[1] describe varying degrees of *approaching the standard*: 4 is for school performance that is closer to *meeting the standard*, while 2 is to be used for school characteristics that are closer to *below the standard*.

To determine the effect of expanding the scale, we examined OMSI's ratings on the same schools for spring 1998 and winter 1999 visits. In Table 2, the comparisons for ten schools for which ratings were available are displayed. With the exception of one school in which a change in principal is recognized to have had a notable positive effect and a second school in which the ratings were slightly higher, the ratings for the rest of the schools are lower.

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[1]The *PASS Performance Review Guide* is available on the Internet at the Board of Education web site. It appears under *Board of Education Information* on its home page. The address is: www.nycenet.edu.

TABLE 2

Comparison of OMSI's 1997-98 and 1998-99 PASS Ratings*

School	OMSI 97-98 Visit		OMSI 98-99 Visit	
	Total Score	# of M's	Total Score	# of M's
A	127	49	115	25
B	144	64	145	56
C	119	40	126	41
D	107	35	38	0
E	151	69	148	59
F	157	75	143	47
G	138	56	120	31
H	136	54	120	33
I	46	10	108	26
J	na	na	132	45

*Where necessary ratings were adjusted, based on the scoring system of the 1997-98 version of the PASS Review Guide, for comparison purposes. Since the scale was expanded from a three-point to a five-point scale, 1998-99 scores were adjusted by multiplying them by 3/5.

Possible explanations for the lower ratings include: a drop in test scores, change in OMSI personnel, and differences in the time of year for the two reviews. However, OMSI representatives generally did not change, the schools showed a slight increase in test results, and both reviews were undertaken well into their respective school years. Eliminating these alternative explanations, the most likely cause is the expansion of the scale to five points and a greater acceptance among school staff who are partners in the consensus-reaching rating process that self-insight into the need for improvement is more important than high scores.

Reinforcing the Value of Self-Insight

To reinforce the value of self-insight over maximizing ratings, the *PASS Toolkit* for members of school leadership teams includes the following guideline.

> **A Successful Exit Conference Produces Insight.**
> *PASS* is not about how high the school scores, but what reviewers have found out about how well the school is doing compared to the standards of practice. This insight, rather than high scores, will enable the school leadership team to plan for school improvement.

This statement is included in the *Toolkit* because, even with the expanded scale, the current preoccupation with accountability issues necessitates repeating the assertion that *PASS* reviews are intended to be for planning and self-improvement, not for external evaluations, and least of all for individual personnel appraisals. Clearly, the best way to reassure school participants in a *PASS* review that the *PASS Review Guide* will be used as intended is for outside visitors on a joint review to be a *critical friend,* establishing a trusting, supportive relationship.

CONCLUSIONS

PASS is a complex process which, if undertaken as a rigorous, self-reflective school review, can be a powerful force for school improvement. It requires participating reviewers to reach consensus on ratings by honestly and systematically evaluating relevant evidence. The resulting self-insight and understanding is presumed to be a catalyst for school improvement.

The ratings contribute to the process by providing a focus for carefully weighing the evidence and developing useful and rigorous comments. Comments are primary, since they provide a direct connection between review findings and subsequent planning. In the absence of ratings, we assume the review of evidence at the exit conference and development of comments would be indifferent and imprecise. In addition, without ratings, a comparison of an individual school's *PASS* reviews over time can not easily reveal progress.

The downside of providing ratings is that they are associated with external school evaluations as yet another accountability system. OMSI's role in conducting *PASS* reviews in SURR schools reinforces this perception. Despite OMSI's focus on helping school staff develop their own capacity for self-assessment, the school staff remain concerned about maximizing their scores.

Expanding the rating scale appears to have countered the tendency for grade inflation. Nevertheless, the reliability of the scores is still threatened by a number of factors including: inadequate training of review team members; limited experience of review team members in exemplary schools; and continued apprehensions about the underlying purpose of the review process.

DAA will address these issues as part of its ongoing development of the *PASS* system, which is viewed as an organic, interactive process -- involving *PASS* practitioners from OMSI, the districts/superintendencies, and the schools themselves. The collaborative spirit of a *PASS* review, in which participants are encouraged to become members of a learning community, is present in the review and revision of the process itself.

Appendix A

Comparison of OMSI's and Bank Street's PASS Review Ratings

	PASS ITEM	Reviewers	Mean	N	Standard. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	School mission	OMSI	5.3333	9	.7071	.2357
		Bank ST	4.4444	9	1.5092	.5031
Pair 2	Welcoming Atmos	OMSI	4.3000	10	.9487	.3000
		Bank St	2.9000	10	1.7920	.5667
Pair 3	Environment	OMSI	4.9000	10	1.1972	.3786
		Bank St	3.6000	10	1.4298	.4522
Pair 4	Org plan	OMSI	9.2500	10	1.1365	.3594
		Bank ST	5.9300	10	2.4775	.7834
Pair 5	Staff qualifications	OMSI	7.2000	10	1.2293	.3887
		Bank ST	5.8700	10	1.7739	.5610
Pair 6	Instruct implement	OMSI	2.9000	10	1.1005	.3480
		Bank ST	1.7000	10	1.5670	.4955
Pair 7	Instruct characterist	OMSI	8.4000	10	1.0750	.3399
		Bank St	5.2000	10	2.7809	.8794
Pair 8	Instruct practice	OMSI	7.3000	10	1.8886	.5972
		Bank St	7.2000	10	2.7406	.8667
Pair 9	Instruct strategy	OMSI	5.6000	10	1.3499	.4269
		Bank St	3.2300	10	2.4667	.7800
Pair 10	Developmnt of staff	OMSI	5.9000	10	.3162	.1000
		Bank St	4.5500	10	1.2572	.3976
Pair 11	Formal prof devlpmt	OMSI	11.6000	10	.5164	.1633
		Bank St	9.8200	10	1.8220	.5762
Pair 12	Library	OMSI	3.7778	9	1.5635	.5212
		Bank St	2.1111	9	1.5366	.5122
Pair 13	Technology	OMSI	5.7000	10	2.9078	.9195
		Bank St	4.4800	10	2.9951	.9471
Pair 14	Equipment	OMSI	6.9000	10	1.2867	.4069
		Bank St	2.9000	10	1.1972	.3786
Pair 15	Parent participation	OMSI	5.9000	10	.3162	.1000
		Bank St	2.8000	10	2.1499	.6799
Pair 16	Parent education	OMSI	5.1000	10	1.1005	.3480
		Bank St	4.0000	10	1.8856	.5963
Pair 17	Pupil personnel	OMSI	5.8000	10	.4216	.1333
		Bank St	5.0000	10	1.2472	.3944
Pair 18	Supple resources	OMSI	5.2000	10	.7888	.2494
		Bank St	3.6000	10	2.0656	.6532
Pair 19	Non inst resources	OMSI	7.9000	10	.3162	.1000
		Bank St	5.9000	10	1.6289	.5151
Pair 20	School assessment	OMSI	4.4500	10	1.0659	.3371
		Bank St	3.6000	10	1.3499	.4269
Pair 21	Student performance	OMSI	6.2000	10	1.6193	.5121
		Bank St	4.3000	10	2.3823	.7534

Pair 22	School effectiveness	OMSI	6.0000	10	.0000	.0000
		Bank St	3.1500	10	1.9444	.6149
	TOTAL SCORE	OMSI	136.0000	10	12.3828	3.9158
		Bank St	96.3000	10	30.9589	9.7901